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ABSTRACT

A profile of the female college president in 1978 was developed by examining demographic and professional characteristics, career patterns, and role definitions of 35 women heading 15 two-year institutions and 20 four-year institutions. When only majority responses for all presidents were considered, results indicated that the woman college president tended to have: (1) spent her entire career in education: (2) worked in three or fewer institutions: (3) received a doctorate degree: (4) had a mother who was at least a high school graduate not working outside the home, and a father who attended college and worked in a professional, technical, or managerial field: (5) not initiated her own application, but was approached by a search committee: (6) expressed great satisfaction with her position: and (7) considered her sex a distinct asset. (Author/HLM)

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THE WOMAN COLLEGE PRESIDENT IN 1978

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In 1871, when Frances Willard was named president of Evanston College for Women, she became the first woman president of an American College or University and represented .18% of all presidents. In 1970, Harris (1970) reported that 1% of all presidents were lay women. In 1977, Comment noted that there were 156 women presidents, 105 of whom were in Roman Catholic institutions. These 156 women represented 5% of the presidents, and the 51 lay women constituted 1.63% of all presidents. In 106 years, the number of colleges and universities increased 436%, the percentage of women presidents increased 28%, and the percentage of lay women presidents increased 9%.

Discouraging as that figure is, it is in contradiction to reports of what is happening to women in other areas of higher education. All of the recent reports are that despite the women's movement and affirmative action programs, the percentage of professional women in higher education is decreasing.

In a 1975 NAWDAC article, Nieboer pointed out that with so few women in administration there were few role models for younger women, and with so few role models an increase of women in administration seemed unlikely. She and others suggested that a profile on personality and personal history characteristics of successful top level administrators would help break the cycle and identify any common characteristics these women had.

My study was an attempt to determine the demographic characteristics, professional characteristics and career patterns, and opinions towards their roles of women presidents of two and four-year institutions, public and private, to compare them to determine similarities and dissimilarities, and to develop a profile

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of the woman president in 1978. Additionally, this profile was compared to the profile Cohen and March (1974) developed for the male president. Data were collected by a mailed questionnaire and taped telephoned interviewees with a representative sample.

I identified 45 women presidents of accredited institutions, excluding Roman Catholic institutions, and 35, or 78%, participated in the study. These presidents headed 15 two-year institutions and 20 four-year institutions. Thirteen of the two-year institutions were public and two were private. Five of the four-year institutions were public--four coeducational and one for women only--and 15 were private--two were coeducational and 13 were for women only. One private four-year institution was the only church-related institution in the study. The institutions were located in 14 different states and most were in the northeast. The size of the institutions ranged from 75 students to over 20,000 students, but the majority had between 500 and 2,499.

The presidents of two-year institutions were older than the others--the majority of them were in the 56-65 age group, while the majority of four-year public institution presidents were between 46 and 55, and more presidents of private four-year institutions were between 36 and 45, making them the youngest group.

Over 68% of all of the presidents were married or had been. More two-year institution presidents than any other group had never married (40% of them had not). The majority (63%) of the married two-year institution presidents had no children while the majority of the others had two or more. The majority (73%) of the presidents had a religious affiliation and most were protestants.

Half of the presidents were only children or had one sibling. Those with one or two or more siblings tended to be first born or last born. Only 10% of the presidents classified themselves as middle children.

Over half of the presidents' mothers did not work while the presidents were growing up. Most other studies have reported that women with doctorates and women in higher education were the daughters of working mothers. Over three-fourths of the mothers were high school graduates and 38% had attended college. Two-thirds of the fathers were high school graduates and over half had attended college; 45% had bachelor's degrees and 15% had advanced degrees. The majority of fathers were in professional, technical, or managerial fields. Therefore, we can say that the presidents had educated parents and came from upper middle class homes.

The majority of presidents attended public high schools and private, coeducational colleges. The private colleges that the two-year institution presidents attended were more than likely church-related while those attended by four-year institution presidents were independent. Although the majority of all presidents attended coeducational undergraduate institutions, over 60% of the four-year institution presidents attended women's colleges. The majority of the presidents were honor students.

The majority of the presidents had doctor's degrees, primarily in education or social sciences. Although education accounted for only 6% of the undergraduate majors, 36% of the doctorates were in education. Thirty-five percent of the undergraduate majors were in social science and 36% of the doctorates were. The majority of presidents were single when they earned the bachelor's and mater's degrees and married when they earned the doctor's degree. The majority earned the master's within three years of the bachelor's and the doctorage within six years of the master's.

The majority of presidents did not plan to become administrators, but half of them held their first administrative position before they were 32 years of age. The primary reasons given for becoming administrators were that they opportunity was presented or the position was offered. Becoming an administrator was not a part of a career plan.

The majority of the presidents had spent their entire careers in education. They had worked in at least three other institutions and had held a variety of different positions--mostly in instruction or some aspect of academic affairs. The mean number of years of pre-presidential academic experience was 18.4. However, the majority came to the institutions as presidents and held no other positions there. The majority, 62%, had been president for three years or less; only one president had been in office for more than 10 years. Four two-year institution presidents and one four-year institution president had been presidents of another institution.

The majority of all presidents were approached by search committees or other representatives of the institution and did not initiate their own applications for the presidency. This was particularly true for private four-year institution presidents, none of whom initiated their own applications. In fact, 83% of the four-year institution presidents were approached by search committees. In contrast, 43% of the two-year institution presidents initiated their own applications.

One president reported a salary below $30,000 and no president reported a salary above $60,000. The mean salary for two-year institution presidents was $37,833, for public four-year institution presidents $44,500, and for private four-year institution presidents $46,807. The mean salary for all presidents was $42,378.8.

When the presidents were asked to indicate how important they considered various factors in their career development, the majority considered these factors important and in this order: timing, chance, influence of a mentor, personal mobility, and contacts in a network. It should be noted that 100% of the respondents considered timing very significant or significant. The least important factors were membership in organizations, considered important by 37%, and publications, considered important by 36%. Whether the presidents had

advanced without publications, or had published but didn't consider that influential is not known. Interestingly, although they did not consider organizational membership important in their career development, the majority belonged to community organizations and professional organizations on the state, regional, and national levels.

Although the majority of all of the presidents had role models, half of the two-year institution presidents did not. The majority of all identified role models were female, and 63% were in higher education. The most frequently named role models were college administrators, and male and female administrators were named with nearly equal frequency. The majority of presidents thought that younger women viewed them as role models, and they were comfortable with that perception.

The majority of presidents had encountered sex-based discrimination at some time during their careers. The experience encountered most frequently, i.e., by 74% of the presidents, was salary and other benefits less than for men in comparable positions. Other experiences encountered by the majority, in decreasing order of frequency, were patronizing treatment by male colleagues, male subordinates' resentment of leadership role, failure to be included by male colleagues in appropriate informal discussions, and female subordinates' resentment of leadership role. Less than half had had promotions or advancements stalled or denied because of their sex, and less than a fourth had experienced lack of encouragement or discouragement by male or female colleagues from pursuing advanced degrees or seeking promotion.

The two-year institution presidents and four-year institution presidents differed in their thinking about the factors that were significant in their advancement to their present positions. The two-year institution presidents thought that their hard work in other positions and their academic credentials, i.e., the doctorate, were the primary factors. The four-year institution presidents thought that luck and the support of others were the primary factors. Additionally,

the presidents of two-year institutions thought that their personal qualifications, i.e., leadership, mobility, persistence, were significant, and the four-year presidents thought that they were insignificant. The presidents thought that more women had not advanced because of discrimination or prejudice, including the reluctance of male dominated boards of trustees and search committees to appoint a woman, and their own reluctance to pay the price. They would advise those who aspire to the presidency to get broad experience, earn a terminal degree, do excellent work, and get training in budgeting and fiscal matters.

The majority of presidents considered their sex a distinct asset in their positions. Again, the two-year institution presidents differed from the majority. The majority of them considered their sex of no consequence. In the four-year private institution, the majority of which were for women only, 87% of the presidents considered their sex a distinct asset.

The presidents found satisfaction in a lot of different areas in their positions, and the majority considered the tasks that they performed the greatest sources of satisfaction. Although there was not a majority position on sources of dissatisfaction, more indicated people-related issues, e.g., unionized faculty and lack of staff, as dissatisfiers. The obstacles to goal achievement listed most frequently were financial and in second place was institutional policies and procedures.

Overall, the majority of presidents were very satisfied with their positions. When the question was considered by institutional type, 87% of the two-year institution presidents were very satisfied, 80% of the public four-year institution presidents were very satisfied; 47% of the private four-year institution presidents were very satisfied and 47% were satisfied. Only one president was ambivalent and she was president of a private four-year institution. No president was dissatisfied.

The two-year institution presidents graduated from coeducational colleges and worked in coeducational colleges. They were older than their counterparts in other types of institutions, were less frequently married, more frequently initiated their own applications for the presidency, more often thought they obtained their positions because of their performance and credentials, were paid the least, and were the most satisfied.

When the women presidents were compared to the profile of men presidents developed by Cohen and March, it was found that the women presidents were slightly older, 46-55 as compared to 50. Although the majority of both were married, the men's marriage rate was higher than the women's--98% as compared to 68%. Both had spent fewer than five years in non-academic performance. The mean number of years of pre-presidential academic experience for women was 18.4 years and for men 11 years.

More of the mothers of women presidents than men presidents were high school graduates and more attended college. More of the fathers of women presidents were high school graduates. The majority of both of their fathers were in professional, technical, and managerial positions.

Men and women presidents were native-born Americans. Men presidents had small town backgrounds and the institutions they served were within a day's drive of their birth places. Women presidents were raised in cities--small and large--and worked in geographic areas different from the ones in which they were born.

The majority of all presidents had doctorates. Men's doctorates were in education, hamanities, or social sciences; women's were in education and social science. Men had advanced up the academic hierarchy through a series of promotions from professor to department chairman to dean or vice president to president. Women presidents' career advancement patterns were not as readily discernible. Although as a group they had held more than 40 different positions in academe, few had been professors or division chairmen.

When majority responses only for all presidents were considered, these demographic and professional characteristics of the woman president of a public or private two or four-year college or university in the United States in 1978 emerged:

1. She was white.
2. She was formerly or currently married.
3. She had a religious affiliation.
4. Her mother was at least a high school graduate who did not work outside the home.
5. Her father attended college and worked in a professional, technical, or managerial field.
6. She graduated from a public high school and a coeducational private college with an enrollment of 500-2,499.
7. She was an honor student.
8. She had an earned doctorate.
9. She was single when she earned the bachelor's and master's degrees, and married when she earned the doctor's degree.
10. She had not included being an administrator in her career plan.
11. She had spent her entire career in education.
12. She had worked in three or fewer other institutions.
13. She came to the institution as president, had held no other positions there, and had been president for three years or less.
14. She was appointed to the first presidency for which she applied.
15. She was approached by a search committee for the presidency and did not initiate her own application.
16. She considered timing and the influence of a mentor the most significant factors in her career development and publications and membership in professional organizations the least significant factors.

17. She belonged to one or more community organizations and was a former or current officer.

18. She belonged to one or more professional organizations.

19. She had a female role model, thought that other women viewed her as a role model, and was comfortable with that perception.

20. She considered her sex a distinct asset in her position.

21. She was very satisfied with her position.

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